

NEW PROGRAM HELPS KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER AND REDUCES STATE DOLLARS SPENT ON OUT OF HOME CARE

FACT SHEET

- Pilot Program started in the Summer of 2000, as a result of a study by the Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD).
- OPD completed the study at the direction of the 1999 Legislature, which sought recommendations for strategies to ensure an equitable method for paying for indigent defense costs in dependency and termination proceedings
- Dependency cases are filed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) alleging child abuse and neglect in order to obtain court intervention to protect the child. Termination cases are filed by DSHS to sever a parent-child relationship.
- The Washington State Legislature has declared the family “a fundamental resource of American life which should be nurtured” and the health and safety of the child as “the paramount concern” in these cases. (Revised Code of Washington 13.34.020)
- The State provides monthly stipends for foster care and, in many cases, for adoption subsidies.
- **The family reunification rate in Washington State has been decreasing steadily since 1996.** According to DSHS reports, Washington’s reunification rate is now over 30% lower than in 1997. There has been a corresponding increase in foster care and adoption costs. Many think that this is in part a result of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act that requires shorter timeframes for handling these cases.
- **In contrast to these statewide decreasing reunification rates, the two pilot program courts have experienced a 53% *increased* reunification rate in pilot cases.**